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Wm Bryant Centennial

A BOOK ABOUT A DAY

1794-1894



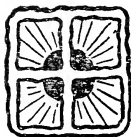
Mary Jackson







THE  
A BOOK ABOUT A DAY  
1794-1894



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The publisher of The Bryant Centennial, Earnest Elmo  
Calkins, certifies that only two hundred and fifty  
copies of the book have been printed,  
each signed by Mr. John Howard  
Bryant, and that this is  
No.



**From "At Eighty-seven"**

And now, amid the fading light,  
With faltering steps I journey on,  
Waiting the coming of the night,  
When earthly light and life are gone.

*John Howard Bryant*



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## A Fore Word

HIS little book preserves the words spoken at Galesburg, Illinois, November 3, 1894, in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the poet, William Cullen Bryant. If a reason were asked for celebrating here on the prairies this day, no better answer could be given than that which Mr. Scudder suggests in his poetic note:

"The sweep of the prairie \* \* and wide horizon belong to the spirit which sounds through his grave, yet impassioned verse;"

or that of Mr. Field's appreciative message:

"Bryant was so loyal a lover, so enthusiastic a student, and so accurate a reader and interpreter, of Nature, that I find it easy to associate him with Galesburg, its embowered homes, its venerable, hospitable trees, its shady walks and driveways, its billowy lawns, its exuberant gardens and its charming vistas. He would have loved that academic spot; he would have loved the people, too, for he would have found them gracious, appreciative and sympathetic in all those high and ennobling lines he always pursued."

And then, too, not far from Knox College, under whose auspices the exercises were held, live the venerable brother of the poet, Mr. John Howard Bryant, himself a poet, and Mr. Edward R. Brown, the orator at the Cummington celebration. The exercises were held in the "Old First Church," a historic "meeting-house" of the Mississippi Valley, Dr. Newton Bateman, the distinguished President-emeritus of Knox College, presiding. The day was as beautiful as Autumn has ever seen, and a great audience was gathered. The description of Bryant's birthplace is from a paper upon the Cummington celebration, read at the Princeton celebration by Mr. Eugene C. Bates.

This preface must speak, too, of the reading of "The Waterfowl," and "Thanatopsis," by Miss Chamberlain; of the song, "Old Friends Are the Truest," by Mr. E. Lester Brown, and of other musical selections by Mrs. Marsh and Miss Jelliff. The rest of the day's exercises will be found within.

This is a book about a day which will be long remembered here as one of the most wholesome, uplifting days that Knox College has known.

JOHN H. FINLEY

Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois  
December 20, 1894









## A Monody

JOHN HOWARD BRYANT

My heart to-day is far away;  
I seem to tread my native hills;  
I see the flocks and mossy rocks,  
And hear the gush of mountain rills.  
  
There with me walks and kindly talks  
The dear, dear friend of all my years;  
We laid him low, not long ago,  
At Roslyn-side, with sobs and tears.  
  
But though I know that this is so,  
I will not have it so to-day;  
The illusion still, by force of will,  
Shall give my wayward fancy play.  
  
With joy we roam around the home,  
Where in our childhood days we played;  
We tread the mead with verdure spread,  
And seek the woodpath's grateful shade.

We climb the steep where fresh winds sweep,  
Where oft before our feet have trod,  
And look far forth, east, south and north,  
Upon the glorious work of God.

We tread again the rocky glen,  
Where foaming waters dash along,  
And sit alone on mossy stone,  
Charmed by the thrush's joyous song.

Anon we stray, far, far away,  
The club-moss crumbling 'neath our tread,  
Seeking the spot, by most forgot,  
Where sleep the generations dead.

And now we come into the home,  
The dear old home our boyhood knew,  
And round the board, with plenty stored,  
We gather as we used to do.

With reverence now, I see him bow  
That head, with many honors crowned;  
All white his locks, as are the flocks  
That feed upon the hills around.

Again we meet in converse sweet  
    Around the blazing, cottage hearth,  
And while away the closing day  
    With quiet speech and tales of mirth.

The spell is broke; ah, cruel stroke!  
    The illusive vision will not stay,  
My fond sweet dream was fancy's gleam  
    Which stubborn fact has chased away.

I am alone, my friend is gone;  
    No more he'll seek that pleasant scene;  
His feet no more shall wander o'er  
    Those wooded hills and pastures green.

No more he'll look upon the brook,  
    Whose banks his infant feet had pressed,  
The little rill whose waters still  
    Come dancing from the rosy west.

Nor will he climb at autumn time  
    Those hills the glorious sight to view,  
When in their best the woods are dressed  
    The same his raptured boyhood knew.

The hermit thrush at twilight's hush  
No more he'll hear with deep delight;  
No blossom gay beside the way  
Attracts his quick and eager sight.

The lulling sound from pines around  
No more shall soothe his noonday rest,  
Nor trailing cloud with misty shroud  
For him the mourning hills invest.

That voice so sweet that late did greet  
My ear each passing summer-tide,  
Is silent now; that reverent brow  
Rests in the grave at Roslyn-side.

His was a life of toil and strife  
Against the wrong and for the good;  
Through weary years of hopes and fears  
For Freedom, Truth and Right he stood.

At length a gleam of broad esteem  
On his declining years was cast,  
And a bright crown of high renown  
Enwreathed his hoary head at last.

His love of song, so deep and strong  
In boyhood, faded not in age;  
Till life's last hour with noontide power  
His genius lit the printed page.

His sun has set, its twilight yet  
Flushes the chambers of the sky;  
A softer flame of spreading fame,  
A glory that shall never die.





## The Sentiment of the Day

W. E. SIMONDS

FEEL that I am here this morning as learner rather than as teacher, and yet as a teacher of literature I am glad of the opportunity to speak brief words in appreciation of the man whose life and work and character we are uniting to honor. One hundred years ago to-day there was born in a certain home among the hills of western Massachusetts our first American poet. I wish that we might, particularly those of us who are younger, catch, during this hour, a glimpse of that home, and breathe its atmosphere. It is indeed a rare privilege that is ours to-day, the privilege of looking into the face and listening to the voice of one who knew that home most intimately,

and of another who was himself a member of that household and knew our poet as only brother can know brother.

It is almost impossible, I take it, for the students of our colleges and high schools to realize the condition of literature in this country at the beginning of the present century. There was no American poet when Bryant was born; but soon, up among the Berkshire hills, the lad began to speak, for the poet in him spoke, and he gave to men in those serious, solemn tones of his, which have come down to the present day like great organ tones, thoughts and ideals that have admonished and inspired. Happily Bryant went to nature and listened to her various voices. In forest and mountain, in the light of the setting suns, the blue sky, the round ocean,—and in the mind of



man, he felt the Presence. Like his brother poet Wordsworth, Bryant, too, heard the still, sad music of humanity, and as to the English seer, so to the American that music was not harsh or grating, although with ample power to chasten and subdue.

But it is not alone the *poet*, whom we honor to-day; it is still more the *man*. In the words which shall be spoken to you here, young ladies and gentlemen, and in the words read to you but written elsewhere, often will the sentiment be noted that it is the *life* of Bryant which is his greatest glory. Poet he was indeed; but his truest poetry was the poetry that he lived. Life is more than utterance and character is greater than mere expression. I am not, however, here to eulogize the hero of the day. On this platform are others better qualified to per-

form that gracious task. To me is given rather to formulate the “sentiment” of the day. Let me address myself especially to the young people in this great audience; and for them particularly, let that sentiment be: “Grateful remembrance by the present of the past. Reverence, affection, gratitude, for our good and true first poet, William Cullen Bryant.”









William Cullen Bryant  
1794-1894

Gentle in spirit as in mien severe;  
Calm but not cold; strength, majesty and grace,  
Measure and balance and repose, in clear  
Lines like a sculptor's, graven on his face.  
Such image lovers of his verse have learned  
To limn their poet, peaceful after strife;  
A statue, as of life to marble turned?  
Nay, as of marble turned to breathing life.

*Frank Bailey*

*William Cullen Wilkinson*

University of Chicago



## Cummington

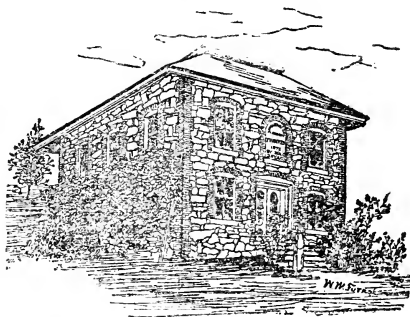
EUGENE C. BATES

Y kin-ship for Cummington has a  
“long and tough root;” little green  
shoots are constantly springing up  
to remind me that it is still alive. I love Cum-  
mington; it is my native town. I love her plain,  
unobtrusive people, true as steel and governed  
by high motives. There are the friends of my  
boyhood and early manhood. The hills and  
valleys, the woods and fields, the rocks, the  
by-ways, the cow lanes and stone walls seem  
to be a part of myself, and only some mighty  
upheaval can detach me from it. But few of  
you have visited this historic spot; yet not one  
within reach of my voice, but will regard it  
with reverence as the early home of the Bry-  
ants. You may not find Cummington on the

map, yet she bears herself proudly regardless of the omission. Situated partly on the crest and at the foot of a mountain, in Western Hampshire county, Massachusetts, midway between Northampton and Pittsfield—the former being in the valley of the Connecticut river, the latter in the Housatonic valley—forty miles apart. It is twelve miles to the nearest railway station. Cummington is about the center of what are called the hill towns of western Massachusetts, lying to the east of the “Berkshire Hills,” made famous by the memory of Hawthorne and the Sedgwicks. The Westfield river divides the town from west to east. The valley is narrow, wooded hills rising from either side, leaving barely room for the highway along the banks of the rocky river bed. To the west the valley



broadens to make room for a small village (West Cummington). Five miles to the east lies the village of East Cummington. Come with me for a drive on this valley road, shaded much of the way with the over-hanging alder, the beech and the birch, down "Dug Hill" to "Lightning-bug," over "Roaring Brook" past the "Bryant Library," a gift from William Cullen Bryant to his



native town, then on to East Cummington. On the south side of the valley, nearly one mile up the steep and rugged mountain-side, half way between the two villages is the Bryant farm and homestead, consisting of forest,

meadow, and orchards of apples and pears. You reach the house through an avenue of maples, the fields lying in peace just beyond. There are no "discordant noises of industry" here. The house, plain and commodious, retains its original shape as built by Dr. Peter Bryant, father of the "Bryant family." We find a well-kept lawn enclosed by a beautiful hemlock hedge. Standing on the broad and generous porch, to the north you look across the valley to the rising hills, dotted with the old farm buildings. In the distance are the quaint old church and town house in Plainfield, the birthplace and the early home of Charles Dudley Warner. To the east of Plainfield you see the hills of Ashfield, made famous as the summer home of George W. Curtis and Charles Elliott Norton.

Here is located the well known Ashfield Academy, which has its annual dinner always graced by New England's leading literary men and women. To the east is the rugged hill-top of Goshen with its one summer hotel. Next south is the perfect New England village of Chesterfield. Crowning her mountain top, the summer home of the Rev. John White Chadwick and his Brooklyn friends. Climbing the mountain-side and west of the "Homestead," to the south you see the old town of Worthington. From the summit of "Mount Bryant," twenty-one hundred feet above the sea, you discern to the west the "Berkshire Hills," and to the northwest rises the rounded point of old Gray Lock. What a panorama of mountains, hills and valleys! In spring and summer, a vast area of ever varying green; in

autumn, crowned with all the vivid colorings of nature; in winter, an ocean of barren hills and rocks and leafless trees, clothed in sombre brown or covered with its mantle of snow, still grand in its ruggedness. What a birth-place and early home for nature's greatest interpreter!





## Hymn

For the Hundredth Anniversary of Bryant's Birth

JOHN WHITE CHADWICK

Thou mighty God, who didst of old  
The psalmist's wondrous song inspire,  
Our hearts are glad that every age  
Is touched by Thy immortal fire.

We bless Thee for that radiant band  
Whose voices on our Western shore  
Have made a music clear and sweet  
Which men shall love forevermore.

Still fresh the grief that fills our hearts  
For him who lingered on awhile,  
When all the rest had gone, to cheer  
Our spirits with his happy smile.

Dear poet of the cheerful heart,  
How can our voices choked with tears  
Lift up a song aright to him  
Whose cycle counts a hundred years?

He loved the vales, the woods, the streams,  
The mountains cheered his loftier mind;  
The winds their summits nurtured found  
His soul as free and unconfined.

A deeper joy his song instilled  
For every flower that gems the sod;  
He looked through Nature's trembling veil,  
And saw the face of Nature's God.

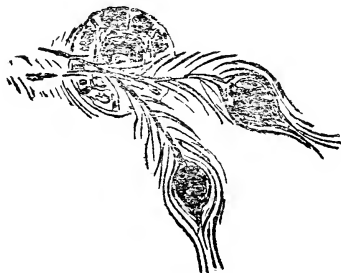
Yet more the press of busy men  
Allured him than the forest's aisle,  
And more the strife with social ill  
Than ever the blue heaven's smile.

Wherever Right her flag unfurled,  
And Justice showed a better way,  
And Truth and Freedom spurned the night,  
And hailed the burnished spears of day,

There was his place and there he made  
His voice a clarion, ringing clear,  
To rouse the sleepers, wake the dead,  
And stay the faint with hope and cheer.

O, Thou, who in the crowded streets  
As in the leafy coverts dim,  
His song inspired, be Thou with us  
As ever, in his day, with him,

That Nature's good our hearts may fill  
With holy peace, while still we move  
With tireless feet on Duty's quest,  
And do the patient work of Love.







“ The melancholy days have come,  
The saddest of the year,  
Of wailing winds and naked woods  
And meadows brown and sere”



## The Centennial Address

EDWIN R. BROWN

HIS occasion is shadowed by the recent death of the gentle and delightful genius who has long been the Autocrat of our breakfast tables. Holmes was the last, as Bryant was the pioneer, of the Great Six of American poetry. He was the last, too, of that high-souled circle of wits, poets and idealists,—Hawthorne, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Agassiz, Motley, and their compeers,—whose habitat was about Cambridge and Concord, and whose work graced and glorified the pages of the old *Atlantic Monthly* in its early days.

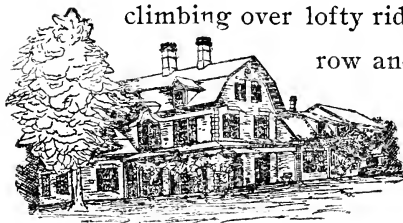


Wherever in the wide Unseen the Autocrat

may be to-day, I have no doubt he sings still  
and will ever sing,

“Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll.”

Cummington is one of the loveliest and most  
secluded little towns of Western Massachu-  
setts. It is accessible only by considerable  
climbing over lofty ridges, by winding, nar-  
row and vine-bordered high-



ways, and has no  
railroad, nor tele-  
graph nor telephone  
nor newspaper. It is

a lost Arcadia in miniature. There, on a  
stormy November evening, exactly a century  
ago, while a raw east wind whistled drearily  
around the mountain home of Dr. Peter Bryant,  
America's first great poet was born. Only four  
days later the weather had changed, and little

Cullen took his first outing with his mother, and looked vaguely out, we may suppose, on the glorious landscape he afterward came to love so well. The region is high, yet sheltered by loftier heights. In the foreground the rapid Westfield river, mostly hidden from view in its deep, narrow valley, sends up, when all is calm, a mellow and soothing roar from its rocky bed. Beyond, the rock-ribbed heights, ridge beyond ridge, stretch away to Monadnock on the east, and on the west, to blue old Greylock.

“Familiar with forgotten years.”

It was one of those mystical and delicious Indian summer days, of which the New England climate always reserves a little sheaf for November,

“As still such days will come

To call the squirrel and the bee from out their winter home;”

one of those days, when, as the legend runs,

“The Indian sun-god, preparing for his winter’s sleep, fills his great pipe and divinely smokes away the hours,” filling all the autumn landscape with the soft blue haze of his dreams. It was a fitting time and place for the introduction of Nature’s own poet to our waiting planet.

Every step in the poet’s long life, every aspect of his character and work, is to me a kind of hallowed pleasure-ground,—but, lest I consume an undue share of your time, I will confine myself to a few phases of the subject, making my talk simple and reminiscent rather than critical. Looking backward from the height of a century, that gentle magician, Distance, lends such tender enchantment to the story of early days among the dear old hills, that I will rather recall the work and play and

rare environment of the poet's youth than the later days of assured honor and world-wide renown.

First, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us locate Bryant in history. A fresh impulse from some unrecognized source was given to men's minds in the early years of the present century. There was a revival of poetry in many lands, a liberation from old forms, bringing in a simpler style, and a closer clinging to the breast of nature. New England gave us, so to speak, six giants of poetry at a birth—Bryant, Emerson, Whittier, Longfellow, Lowell and Holmes. Across the sea arose a similar group almost simultaneously—Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, Coleridge, Keats and Tennyson.





Poets are not necessarily abnormal, unbalanced and improvident beings. All the American group came of sound and well-regulated families, and all had charming households of their own, well provided for. All were profoundly religious, and though not one of them could be counted evangelical, they all modestly sang and lived that elder and eternal religion that is always true, while theologies and mythologies pass away. I heard that bundle of energy and efficiency, your own President Finley, remark in an eloquent Fourth of July address, that there are languages in which there is no such word as home; but with our poetic Six that word home is the central







sun around which language revolves. John Bright said he liked to read American poets better than the British, not that they were better poets, but because they were better citizens.

Wordsworth first caught on his side of the sea, the new spirit I have spoken of, as did Bryant on the American. These two have much in common. There is the same simplicity and exquisite fitness of language, the same tenderness, and the same sense of eternal equilibrium in the universe,—

“No great and no small  
To the Soul that maketh all”

Bryant is the more modest. In Wordsworth it is always Wordsworth who speaks; in Bryant the voice often seems to come from “earth and her waters,



and the depths of air." To them both the twinkle of a dewdrop in the grass is as essential to the integrity of the universe as the mighty whirl of Saturn and his rings of glory.

Of the group of large-brained and stout-hearted brothers and sisters, of whom William Cullen Bryant was the bright particular



star, but one remains "on this bank and shoal of time," John Howard Bryant, who, thank heaven, is with us this morning in a fair state of health. Full of days and of good works, he carries off his eighty-seven years with brain unscathed, and a brave and cheerful spirit. "Winter is on his head, but eternal spring is in his heart." He seems to me, now that the Great Six have passed away, to be a kind of afterglow left on our sky.

I have no sympathy with that Talmagian, emotion-hunting spirit that runs back with literal keg and bottle to bring home water from the Jordan or the Rubicon. But I confess to an intense interest in the mountain homestead where our poet and his brother wrought with axe and flail, while his mother and sisters made Æolian music on the spinning wheel. It is no wonder that in August last a great company—great in quality as well as in number—gathered on the old farm and honored themselves in honoring the poet's memory, as you, ladies and gentlemen, are doing here this morning. That company were seated in the shade of venerable beeches on whose dappled bark the poet carved his name ninety years ago. A few rods away flows the now classic "Rivulet," still "singing

down its narrow glen;" and across a narrow meadow on the south stands the dark wood for whose entrance the "Inscription" was written, its tall trees still waving and whispering in response to the mountain wind, that "most spiritual thing of all the wide earth knows." Across the deep gorge of the Westfield can be seen winding up the opposite heights the narrow highway up which young Bryant walked in the twilight of a December day in 1815, feeling forlorn and desolate over his prospects in life, for he was now twenty-one years of age, and was going out to make his own way in the big practical world for himself. Against the crimson afterglow of sunset he noted the flight of a single duck on his southward migration. Here was a wanderer as lonely as himself, speeding confidently away into distance

and approaching night. It was this incident that suggested and called forth those lines, by many counted his best, "To a waterfowl." You all know the closing stanza; at least, that little quatrain which has been to multitudes in hours of doubt and apprehension, "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," with its sublime trust, and will be while the language endures,—

"He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will lead my steps aright."

Victor Hugo was right when he said, "Every bird that flies carries the thread of the infinite in his claw." That lone bird disappeared in the distance, and the poet has passed to the Unseen, but by a noble touch of genius that thread became a cable of hope and trust,

strong and imperishable. And O, how often, to the reformer, harried and buffeted in the long struggle with ignorance and sham and wrong, come, like cooling water from the well of Haran, those precious lines,

“Truth crushed to earth will rise again,  
The *eternal years of God* are her’s!”

Do not wonder that I have made much of locality, for there is not a rustic home, a gurgling brook, or a murmuring pine on all my native hills that has not its added dower of beauty from Bryant’s immortal words. He made those mountain streams sacred in literature like the Avon and the Doon. And let me remind you, that no other has sung so grandly and truly of the Prairies as he. In company with his youngest brother he rode over these

broad and silent savannas on horseback, when  
the wild, unshorn and verdant wastes shone

“With flowers whose glory and whose multitude  
Rivalled the constellations.”

The “Painted Cup,” in scarlet tufts, glowed  
in the wide stretch of green like flakes of fire;  
and the little Indian demon, the Manitou of  
flowers, drank from those bright chalices the  
gathered dew. Those flowers, as Fitz-Greene  
Halleck would have said, were beings of  
beauty and decay, and they are gone; ripened  
corn leaves rustle to-day where the Painted  
Cup glowed on the boundless lawn sixty years  
ago; the locomotive has supplanted the bison,  
but on Bryant’s own “Prairies” the bison still  
roams a monarch, and the “Painted Cup”  
blooms on, and will bloom on forever.

Bryant was as nearly without vices as men get

to be. He was a marvel, but no miracle. He was the result of high and favoring conditions. Among these is the fact that he came of a line sound in physique, strong of brain and eminent for virtue; and that the perspective of his lineage runs back to John Alden and Priscilla Mullins under the bows of the Mayflower. Strength and integrity characterized the line.



In Bryant's parentage there was a happy combination of Cavalier and Puritan in temperament. Dr. Peter Bryant, genial, scholarly, generous and poetic; Mrs. Bryant, plodding, persistent, energetic and scrupulous as the lines of light,—what happier race mixture could be desired? The poet's grandfather Snell was Abrahamic, Puritanic and severe in faith. The old gentleman had



in him a vein of humor, but a joke from Squire Snell was a comic cherub carved on an old-time tombstone. Usually he was so grave that, as Lamb would say, "Newton might have deduced the law of gravitation from him." To little Cullen his Puritan grandfather was a cave of gloom; his mother was his reliance, and his father was sunshine and inspiration.

There was then no ceaseless flood of cheap books and periodicals, good, bad and indifferent, as to-day, but Dr. Bryant wisely provided appetizing and nourishing pasturage of books in which his children could browse at will, such as "Little Jack," "Robinson Crusoe," and Mrs. Barbauld's stories. Often, the Doctor, returning weary from his severe professional rides over the hills, would stretch himself out on the "settle," and would call Cullen

to read or recite from Watts' Hymns; for their perfect musical rhythm and noble imagery were a restful delight to him. This the boy would do, usually mounting a chair to give his delivery vantage ground. Whether so intended by



the Doctor or not, this was an admirable training for the ear and the imagination of the future poet. Then followed the best periodicals, few, but nutritious, in which good Dr. Channing shone a star of the first magnitude; and always at hand were Plutarch and the poets, Pope, Gray and Goldsmith. From these sprang the poet's early and lifelong interest in the Greeks and their struggles for liberty, in which he became as enthusiastic as Byron himself. On rainy days the little boys, Austin and William Cullen, would be-

take themselves to the barn, and with old hats for helmets, and plumes of tow, would fight over again the battles of the Greeks and Trojans.

Dr. Bryant was an accomplished physician, a Federalist and a leader in politics, with a high literary reputation and great hospitality. These considerations drew authors, judges and clergymen from far and near, to tarry for a night, and refresh themselves by contact with a man of culture and information. The coming poet and politician, as a listening and receptive boy, must have absorbed from such company much that no professional boys' school could have given him. Then he had the virgin forest solitudes for a playground, and there his mind, without effort of his own, became stored with those pleasing natural images and

analogies which he used with such magic effect in all the after years.

Except for the companionship of a scholarly father at odd hours, and the many visitors at the homestead, Bryant's boyhood passed much like that of other lads in the same region, though he must often have felt stirring within him higher thoughts and sweeter dreams than he could share with his rustic companions. The meagre winter school, the Meeting-House, solemn and cold, standing cheek by jowl with the tavern, jolly and warm; the great stage coach, and the driver's mellow horn; the "Post Rider," bringing the county paper; "Militia Trainings" on "Meeting-House Green," raisings, huskings, apple bees and singing schools,—these as well as hard work, were features of the time; and best of all, that gen-

uine civic "university extension," the New England town-meeting, that most precious institution brought from the Netherlands by the Pilgrim Fathers. It was a model school of public business and debate which boys were allowed to attend. The "March Meeting" was the Massachusetts House of Commons, and the orthodox pulpit was its House of Lords.

I often wonder whether we should ever have had from Bryant a *Thanatopsis* or a *Forest Hymn* if our present mediocrity-making school system, with its constant competitive examinations, and its markings and child prizes, had been in vogue a hundred years ago. I do not believe we should. Far better was it for the boy Bryant to listen to Socratic discussions by his father's broad fireside, or to the "nooning"

debates of the sturdy farmers, as they ate their rye and Indian bread and cheese on the steps of the Old Yellow Meeting-House. These discussions were largely political, the majority of the people of the region, led by Dr. Bryant, being zealous Federalists. Jefferson was New England's bugaboo. It was the very time of which Wendell Phillips used to tell, when Massachusetts mothers frightened their children to sleep by saying, "Thomas Jefferson!" But the boy poet had learned to reason, and so, though as a boy he gave his satire free rein on Jefferson in his "Embargo," in due time he became an honored leader of the Jeffersonian forces of the land.

No Greek or Roman matron of heroic days left a more spotless record of a busy life than the poet's mother. To her example he attrib-

utes his rigid adherence to the great rule of right without regard to persons. She was in person tall, agile and strong, her clear, fresh complexion giving her a youthful appearance, even in old age. She was an expert horse-woman, and at the age of sixty-seven could vault from the ground into the saddle.



The poet's mother kept a most remarkable diary. Not such as most of us keep, which after the first week or two of the New Year is left to perish of neglect, but she kept one for fifty-three solid years, without the break of a day. Every day has, in her own hand, a condensed record of weather, household work and neighborhood events. Nothing was allowed to interfere. Company, sickness, journeys, birth, death itself, made no break in the record.

Each year has its quaint little volume, the paper being cut and bound by her own hands, and sewed with linen thread of her own spinning. The poet's reticence, his steadfastness, and his life-long care never to say the wrong word, are foreshadowed in this diary. This kind, persistent, practical woman, in all the nearly 20,000 entries of the diary, makes no complaint, speaks no unpleasant word of a neighbor, and utters never a syllable of cant or gush! Old Isaac Disraeli, in his three volumes of the "Curiosities of Literature," has nothing to match this.

Among the quaint and suggestive memoranda of baking, brewing, spinning, church-going, and sausage-cutting, would come such items as this, "Warped a piece for Mrs. Briggs," "Made a bonnet for myself," "Made



NOVEMBER 9, 1794.

Paid.

MEMORANDUMS and REMARKS.

Mo. 3 Stormy wind N.E.  
churned - unwell. seven  
at Night a son Brown  
Mamma & Mrs Shaw here.

Tu. 4 Clear wind N.W.  
got up. Hannah Cobb  
come. Mamma went  
home. ~~Mamma went home~~

W. 5 Clear wind N.W.  
set up all day. went into  
the ditching Mr Jones  
died - Buined at nine in the  
evening - washing done.

Th. 6 Clear wind N.W.  
mamma come - Baking  
done - Snowing & breezy  
set up all day. ~~from eight o'clock~~

F. 7 Clear wind N.W.  
warm went to Mr  
Shaw - Capt. Baters  
Child died. ~~Child died~~ Capt. Lazzell

Sa. 8 Clear wind N.W.  
Mrs Lanes Child  
died

Su. 9 Clear wind N.W.  
cold windy. Mrs  
Fife here at noon

a cover for John" (a cover was an all-around apron), "Turned a pair of trousers for Cullen."

And here is an entry of especial interest for this occasion. It was made a hundred years ago to-day. It is not underscored; there is no index finger pointing it out as important, yet it marks an era in American literature:

"M. 3. Stormy; wind n. e.; churned; unwell; seven at night a son born."

From the record for 1811, we find that Cullen was at Williams College, but came home in May. A calf was killed, but whether in honor of the student's return is not stated. In December, 1811, he goes to Worthington to study law; and he goes wearing the overcoat his own mother cut and made for him. It also appears that she made the bottlegreen broad-

cloth suit which her husband, the Doctor, wore in the Massachusetts senate.

Still on and on the diary goes for more than half a century, till at Princeton, in the winter of 1847, it records her fall, and the breaking of a hip, but there is no break in the record, which still tells the weather, the kindness of friends, the coming and going of fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad, the last tremulous entry being made by her own stiffening fingers, on the last day of her life, May 1, 1847.

In the lines beginning, "The May sun sheds an amber light," Bryant speaks tenderly of his mother.

"Thanatopsis" must be counted the most remarkable of short poems. The extreme youth of the author, and the fact that the

existence of the poem was a secret shared with no other human being, for five years at least, give it a mystery and marvel that add to its grandeur. It is the vastest figure of death ever drawn. The subject, though ancient as Arcturus and Orion, and hackneyed forever, seems new and untried. The author tells us only what we knew full well before, but tells it with such fitness and power that he seems to be the original discoverer, and to have rescued the fact from chaos. Like the shot of the embattled farmers at Concord, it was the first of its kind,—a voice heard round the world. We can well imagine Milton saying to Bryant, as he said to another, “After so glorious a performance, you ought to do nothing that is mean and little, not so much as to think of anything but what is great and sub-

lime!" If any such injunction was heard by our author, grandly did he heed it.

When as a boy of eight to ten years of age, I sat on the "Little Seats" in the old red school-house on the Cummington hills, the bigger boys and girls sometimes had "Thanatopsis" for a reading lesson. I was always a deeply interested listener when the big boys and girls struggled through the noble selections in the old readers. Even then there arose in my mind a vague wonder why it was, that to hear the minister talk of death made my flesh creep and my heart sink, while to hear "Thanatopsis," though the theme was the very same, was soothing and exalting. Doubtless this was in part due to the large way in which the subject is viewed in the poem, the magnificent vastness and univers-

ality of the fact of death taking away the feeling of loneliness and gloom. It was even a little flattering,—“Thou shalt lie down with patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,” and so on. Perhaps it was also the deep sea roll of its rhythm, and the exquisite simplicity and fitness of language, which even a child could feel, and whose beauty not even the shambling awkwardness of the rustic readers could altogether mar or hide. Its solemn imagery came into my boyish mind with the pensive sweetness of far-off midnight music. There is nothing in it pitiful and distressing, as in Addison’s “Vision of Mirza,” with its terrible bridge in the valley of Bagdad, but all is grand, orderly and serene.

A mile from the Bryant home on a high ridge of rock, called “Meeting-House Hill,”

stood the "Old Yellow Meeting-House," a huge, wind-shaken structure, in whose vast attic were kept the town's reserve of muskets and ammunition. Sitting in the gallery of that old meeting-house might be seen on Sundays in the summer of 1811, a handsome, smooth-faced youth of seventeen, who seemed to be listening decorously to the long homilies poured forth by good Parson Briggs from the high pulpit, in which the preacher seemed to be going to sea in a mug. Really, the thoughts of the handsome youth in the wide gallery were wandering in "God's first temples," and he was listening to "Airs from viewless Eden blown," for "Thanatopsis" was then taking form in his mind. How little the grave and stately minister dreamed that, when eighty years should have rolled away, the solil-

oquy of the handsome youth would be known and admired in all civilized lands and languages, while his own faithful and sonorous messages of more than fifty consecutive years, would have passed, with the tall pulpit and sounding-board from which they were promulgated, to a deep and common forgetfulness! "Thanatopsis" is the soliloquy of youth, yet forgotten nations, ancient constellations, and the living present seem to be reverently listening, and adding their solemn Amen.

"The golden sun,  
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,  
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,  
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread  
The globe are but a handful to the tribes  
That slumber in its bosom.—Take the wings  
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,  
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods  
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,  
Save his own dashings—yet the dead are there:  
And millions in those solitudes, since first  
The flight of years began, have laid them down  
In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone."



This was not written for fame nor to propagate a theory. We all instantly agree that what is said is true, but if there were a theory, the more exact the statement, the more certain we should be of disagreement. It was no more affected by authority, conventionalism, the exigencies of reputation, or financial considerations than the "flight of years" itself.

Henry Ward Beecher, in a discourse delivered soon after the poet's death, pronounced "Thanatopsis" a pagan poem. Well, it is the poem of the human race, and that includes the pagan. It is pagan, as the air, the sea, and the Zodiac are pagan. Death is simply and surely restored to its proper place in the beautiful, universal order. It is the one great poem to which a date would be an impertinence. It fits as perfectly for ten thousand

years ago, or ten thousand years hence, as for today. No modern genius has given sweeter expression to youth and beauty, than did some of the pagan poets, dead twenty centuries ago; but of all the long line, from Homer down, it was reserved for the boy Bryant, more than any other, to complete Nature's circuit, and make even old age and death grand and sweet.

Let us recall for a moment Bryant's rare personality. There was an indefinable something in his whole aspect that at once conveyed the impression of a nature reverend, robust and grand. He was erect in figure, always standing squarely on both feet,—a mental as well as a physical characteristic. His head and face, like his first great poem, seemed to belong to all ages of the world. What a capital model it would have furnished for a gigan-

tic sculpture on the pediment of the Parthenon! Some faces carry their date and all their story in the lines of expression. The whole book is printed on the cover. Bryant's deeply carved countenance was hieroglyphic, and belonged to ante-diluvian, post-diluvian, or current time, according to your imagination. Keen eyes, peering out from the shadow of overhanging brows, did not hold you, like the "glittering eye" of the Ancient Mariner, but they penetrated to your very marrow.

Like his father he liked to be neatly dressed, for he had none of the small "pride that apes humility." Antisthenes, the Cynic, affected a ragged coat; but Socrates said to him, "Antisthenes, I can see your vanity peering out through the holes of your coat." Bryant carefully observed the rules of good society, but

felt no sense of incongruity in the company of shirt-sleeved laborers, nor would he, like Scott's Sir Piercie Shafton, blush to lead the farmer's daughter out to dinner or the dance.

He was reticent. Even with old acquaintances he did not conceal his distaste for those pretty conventional fibs and pretences that come of "making" talk. He loved to hear and tell a good funny story, but took little part in the lightning-bug sparkle of social time-killing. He loved to have with him on a long stroll, an original-minded and suggestive friend, who could enjoy the companionship of silence, and take a great deal for granted. Webster had a talent for sleep. Bryant had a talent for solitude and silence. He must often have felt like saying, as little Paul Dombey at the seaside said to the sympathetic, chattering chil-

dren around him, "Go away, if you please; thank you, thank you, but I don't want you."

Bryant's power of acquiring knowledge was so prodigious, and his industry so unremitting, that in effect he lived two or three centuries. His wonderful memory was not a Robert Houdin drag-net, raking in every thing, good, bad and indifferent. Only that which had merit of some kind was retained. To him titles were tittles, and he would not wear one. The popular notion that he was of cold and impassive temperament is perhaps excusable, because of his coolness with strangers, though the truth is, that he was intense in friendship and had a torrid temper. His whole life, however, having been a struggle to overcome imperfections of every kind, he came at last to hold an air-brake control of himself, and

became one of the gentlest of men. Yet one who should at any time presume to impugn his personal integrity, or to kill the wild birds on his premises, would become aware of heat under that cool exterior. Not Sterne's "My Uncle Toby" himself could have been more tender with the suffering, or more gentle with the animal creation than he. Bryant secured nothing of what is called "passional training"—Lord save the mark!—by the sacrifice of women's hearts, as did Goethe, Byron and Burns. The windows of his soul were open to veracity, courage and virtue, and these angels brought him the gift of tongues and of song. Like the planets in their courses, Bryant was never idle, never behind time, and never in a hurry. He was the most American of our poets. He belongs to the soil and skies

of his native land, as distinctly as the bison and the bald eagle. He was an optimist, with the serene assurance of great and earnest souls that the universe is sound and God is well. His faith was like the eternal sunset in Faust, where every height is on fire and every vale is in repose. Browning passionately vociferates that "God is well." He cries, "Iterate, reiterate, snatch it from the hells." Bryant in serener mood leads us on to where the same glorious assurance opens upon us,

"From the empyreal height  
With warmth, and certainty, and boundless light."

Bryant has no line of despair—not one! His God may not be, as Socrates said his was, "a God of glee," but he is a God of serene and eternal joy.

Bryant's poetry, like the play-acting of

Booth and Jefferson, is neither startling nor sensational, and may at first seem to lack fire, but, like everything truly beautiful, it is a constant revelation. Gradually absolute fidelity to nature attunes our taste to a faultless execution.

Parke Godwin has happily said, that poetry is "the steeping of the palpable and familiar in the glorious dyes of the ideal." Matthew Arnold says, it is "a faculty of divination," and Coleridge, that it is "the best words in the best order." Bryant fully answers all these definitions. His exquisite choice of words, in sound as well as signification, is a continual delight. A hundred instances will come to the minds of some of you; I can only pause to note one or two:



"The sound of dropping nuts is heard  
Though all the trees are still."—

Not *falling* nuts, but *dropping*; leaves fall, nuts drop. When he speaks of the "still lapse of ages," the words hold you, and compel you to linger. And mark how smoothly and silently

"The long train of ages glides away"

in an infinite perspective! The finest touches we feel, but can hardly analyze, for much of their power and sweetness lies in the ear of him that hears.

Bryant is accurate, but does not weary with detail, like the old poets, nor with cataloguing, like Walt Whitman. He sees the veins and cilia and serratures of the leaf, but he does not anatomize or dissect it. His style is so simple and clear as to seem inevitable.

"Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn leaves lie dead;  
They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbit's tread."

How easy, and how obvious! How else could it have been written? It is the artlessness of perfect art. You will not find a crutch or a club-foot in all Bryant's procession. He is a great contrast with Emerson, who, always rich in thought, and often perfect in rhythm, sometimes carelessly leaves a bar down, or a linch-pin out, as when he is talking of the Adirondack woods,

"Where feeds the moose, and walks the surly bear,  
And up the tall mast runs the woodpecker!"

Holmes explains that we may make this couplet rhyme by a bit of verbicide, thus:

"Where feeds the moose, and walks the surly bear,  
And up the tall mast runs the woodpeck-are!"

Bryant's personifications of wind and stream and mountain we accept instantly and com-



pletely. "The Rivulet" and the "Evening Wind" become personalities as distinct to you and me as Clark E. Carr or Doctor Bateman.

Hear him in the "Night Journey of a River," talking to the rolling stream:

"O River! darkling River! what a voice  
Is that thou utterest while all else is still—  
The ancient voice that, centuries ago,  
Sounded between thy hills, while Rome was yet  
A weedy solitude by Tiber's stream!"

Bryant began the practice of law in the little hamlet of Plainfield, Massachusetts, but soon exchanged its loneliness for the wider opportunities and excellent society of Great Barrington. Here he was fairly successful in his profession, and laid the foundation of a home, by a most happy and accordant marriage. Through his own aspirations, and the suggestions of the learned and appreciative Sedg-

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## References

## HOWARD

and  
der an

he entered in 1825 a wider and more  
field of labor in the metropolis. His  
already secure. Bryant lived in his  
two long lives, and was pre-eminent  
poet and editor. Dr. Holmes, says  
breath of noble verse outlives all that  
ved in stone or cast in bronze." Bry-  
therefore, rests mainly on his verses,  
chief merit is that he was a great and  
moral force. In the earlier part of  
al career the moral apathy of the  
as profound and almost hopeless.  
ade the *Evening Post*, for a whole

generation, not only a recognized literary authority, but the high-water mark of public and political morality. He was as true and as imperturable as Alpha, the star of the north. For two generations he labored as a man among men, for the strengthening of that moral sentiment, and that public and private virtue, which lie at the basis of all politics and all religion that are worth anything to mankind.

In the very citadel of negrophobia and Baal-worship he raised the standard of that "Higher Law," whose home, as old Richard Hooker said, "Is in the bosom of God, and whose voice is the harmony of the universe." And when, in 1865, it became almost safe for Colleges to listen to Conscience, for Statesmen to be wise, for Commerce to be honest, for the Church to be Christian, and for Courts to be just, none

rejoiced with a profounder joy than this modest, faithful poet-editor, for none had played a nobler part than he in the mighty struggle.

“Blest and thrice blest the Roman  
Who sees Rome’s brightest day,”

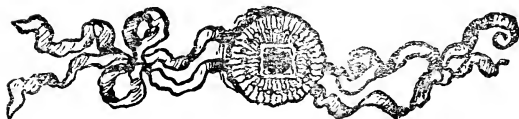
and this our Cato saw.

Few lives have been so well rounded and complete. No window in this Aladdin palace was left unfinished, but a magic lamp of genius long shone clear from every one. His first word was the absolute truth of nature, and his last was an aspiration for that day-dawn, “when the rights and duties of human brotherhood shall be acknowledged by all the races of mankind.”

Bryant was great in genius, great in experience, great in purity of life, great in mod-

esty and simplicity. Let Clio, muse of history, in the book of Fame write him immortal, and bid men earn and claim a palm like his.

Trusting the present, tolerant of the past,  
Firm-faithed in what shall come  
When the vain noises of these days are dumb—  
His first word was noble as his last.













FROM THE EDITOR  
OF THE CENTURY

Every lover of letters will be glad that you are to keep in memory the one hundredth birthday of Bryant. The principal question concerning every poet is whether he is indeed a poet. That is the one matter of importance—the rank time only can determine. That Bryant was a true poet there is no doubt. At his best he was an artist of no mean power; he had an exquisite truth of expression, and now and again the quick light of imagination.

He was also something beside a poet. He was, here in New York, our “first citizen,” a noble figure and influence in our civic life; a good man, a patriot, a statesman. His influence did not cease at the city’s

bounds, nor with his lifetime. The nation was better for his thought, his pure and lofty art; it always will feel the effect upon it of the life of the poet, editor, and patriot whose hundredth birthday you honor yourselves in thus remembering.

Truly yours  
R. W. Fielder.

New York, November 1, 1894.



FROM THE EDITOR  
OF THE ATLANTIC

I am sorry that my engagements since receiving your kind invitation have prevented me from writing before, so that I am forced now to content myself with little more than an acknowledgment of your courtesy.

There is, I think, a singular fitness in the celebration of Bryant's anniversary in the West, aside from the personal reasons which appear; for Bryant's poetry has in it the elemental quality; a great sky broods over it; the lines, like his waterfowl, seem to rise and pass into large ether; and the sweep of the prairie, the spaciousness of great lakes and wide

horizon belong to the spirit which sounds through his grave, yet impassioned verse. The nation, now that it has gathered its great singers in the upper air, could ill afford to miss from that august choir the voice of Bryant.

*I am very dear Sir*

*Sincerely yours*

*H. E. Scudder*

Boston, November 1, 1894.



FROM THE AUTHOR OF  
"A LITTLE BOOK OF WESTERN VERSE"

I am sorry that I cannot be with you at the Bryant celebration. I should like to testify by my presence to my reverence and love for the noble old poet. *Diis alitur videtur*. There are exacting home duties; things must be written; a delicate little baby daughter must be watched; the wolf must be kept from the door.

Many years have elapsed since my home was among your people. They have been eventful years with me, yet at no time in all that period have I ceased to think affectionately and tenderly of the old associates and the old scenes. And it has given me great regret indeed that I have not yet been able to

demonstrate in some practical and effective way how large an obligation I feel that I am under to Knox, by no means the least beloved of my numerous *Almae Matres*.

It would be particularly pleasant to renew old friendships under the auspices of that reunion which you are about to celebrate. Bryant was so loyal a lover, so enthusiastic a student, and so accurate a reader and interpreter of Nature, that I find it easy to associate him with beautiful Galesburg, its embowered homes, its venerable, hospitable trees, its shady walks and driveways, its billowy lawns, its exuberant gardens and its charming vistas. He would have loved that academic spot; he would have loved the people, too, for he would have found them gracious, appreciative and sympathetic in all those high and ennobling lines he always pursued.

Dear sir, with every assurance of cordial regard,  
I am,

Yours very sincerely,

EUGENE FIELD

Buena Park, November 1, 1894





FROM THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE GRANDISSIMES "

Let me thank you sincerely for the privilege of contributing a written word to your celebration of the great life begun one hundred years ago almost in sight of the window where I sit at work.

It seems to me especially fitting that the Centennial of the birth of Bryant should be commemorated in that "West" which was in his day as truly a land of Divine promise and command as was Canaan to the people of Moses.

Our East was no Egypt to him; by no dark spiritual experience did he ever know a land of captivity; but your vast prairies, with their splendid invitation

to all lovers of freedom and progress to work out under their friendly sky the countless, painful problems of the earth, were to him a mirror of his own majestic spirit as a prophet of political righteousness and liberty, a priest of nature, and the most American of poets.

Ever yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. M. Cable". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "J. M. Cable".

Dryad's Green, Northampton, Mass., October 29, 1894



FROM THE EDITOR  
OF THE DIAL,

I feel myself honored by your invitation to participate in the proposed celebration of Bryant's birthday at Knox. Unfortunately for me, circumstances imperatively forbid my being present on that interesting occasion. But I thank you sincerely for the kindness of your invitation, and beg you to express my thanks to President Finley.

I am glad to learn of this altogether fitting celebration. It is a good sign for literature and for higher education, when our colleges take up in this practical way the duty—which is even more a privilege than a duty—of honoring the work and worth of our greatest American authors and greatest American citizens. Now that the last of the noble group has left us—the group that gave to American life in our

century its chief glory—their genius and their virtues cannot be too strongly impressed upon the young, who are the heirs of to-day and the moulders of the future. There is surely a legitimate and honorable pride in one's own literature and one's own country, in thus paying reverent tribute to the distinguished men who have done so much for us and for humanity. It is peculiarly fitting that this tribute be paid, and this reverent and patriotic spirit be invoked, on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bryant—the leader and patriarch of the illustrious band whose work has so quickened and advanced the literary development of our country, and become an imperishable part of the literature of our English race. Bryant was peculiarly, and in the best sense, an American. No man has more strongly urged or more strikingly exemplified at once the claims of good literature and the virtues of good citizenship. Especially in his later years, when he was active in all civil affairs, *life* was to him the noblest aim, "his manhood better than his verse." He was poet and patriot in one. And as in literature his work was always dignified, simple, genuine, scorning the slightest touch of anything tawdry or meretricious in his art, so were his political teachings always inspiring and uplifting, founded upon the loftiest ideals of private and public morality, and working always to the end of "nobler manners, purer laws." The trickster and the trimmer in politics were as in-

tolerable to him as the sensationalist or the clown in literature. Lacking the sense of humor which was so large a saving grace in Holmes and Lowell, who could satirize as well as denounce, and laugh at the follies which they might not cure, the austere temperament of Bryant—the patriot politician, the scrupulous and high-minded journalist, the dignified and fastidious poet—would have suffered many a rude shock in our later day, when character and attainments count for so little in public life that the phrase “scholar in politics” is used in derision by practical politicians of the dominant sort; when journalistic enterprise seeks not only for new worlds of patronage to conquer but for new depths of degradation to explore; when maudlin sentimentalism and vulgar doggerel make up so large a part of popular current poetry. And here, perhaps, is the place to point the practical moral for the young men and women of our time—a time when both politics and literature are too often degraded by the popular tolerance, and even the approval, of low aims and ignoble achievements. If I might speak one word louder than another to the students of Knox College, it would be, Keep your aims high and your methods clean. Beware of the prevalent vulgarity, in politics, in literature, in life. Least of all must you expect your work to be high if your life is low. Make no sophistical distinction between public acts and private morals. Never allow the political to be separated from the ethical. Do not

disassociate literature from life; feel, rather, that literature is life, and the best part of life. You must be able to feel great things before you can express them. If you wish to do something worthy in the world, seek first to be something worthy in yourself. And if, in these and many other things, you need an example and an inspiration, you may well look for them in the life and teachings of the great poet and the good citizen whom you will best honor by making his influence vital in your lives.

J. J. Thorne.

Chicago, November 1, 1894



FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Some of Mr. Bryant's poetry will undoubtedly live. As in the case of Mr. Lowell, it was a misfortune to letters that poetry was destined to suffer from a divided attention. I think no one can read Mr. Lowell's letters without feeling that it was a great loss to poetry and literature that he was obliged to work so hard as a college professor. I think also, in the case of Bryant, it was a loss to literature that one who promised to be our foremost poet felt obliged to devote himself to the arduous work of editing a daily paper. In saying this I am not insensible to the vast service rendered by Mr. Bryant in raising the standard of journalism. Possibly his service in this way was greater than in any other. All that I mean is that his contributions to literature might have been far greater and far more important if the *Evening*

*Post* had not for so many years occupied a predominant place in his thought.

To bring before the people the life and services and aspirations of a man like Mr. Bryant at such a time as this is a real service in behalf of better standards and methods.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "O. K. Adams".

Madison, Wis., November 1, 1894



FROM THE PRESIDENT OF  
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

I can add little to what (as is proved by their words at Cummington last August) Mr. Bryant and Mr. Brown will so fittingly say to you next Saturday; nor need I emphasize the thought you all have anticipated: that the death of Holmes, occurring so near to the anniversary of Bryant's birth, fittingly if pathetically rounds out a significant century in the history of American poetry.

The more I reflect upon the history of our literature, the more do I dwell on the fact that, as Irving was the real beginner of our literature in prose, so Bryant was the first to emerge in a large and masterful way as to the leader of our band of true poets. He saw the relations of man to the Divine above him and to Nature about him, and therefor shared, as an original force, in the great romantic movement which, in his early years, so powerfully affected English verse in two nations; and the depth of his thought was equalled by the strength of his word.

I can never forget the impression of dignified reserve, mingled with kindly beneficence, which was left by the poet—both bard and sage—a few months before his death, when I had occasion to visit him with reference to the last poem he contributed to the periodical press. Its theme was the birthday of Washington, whom Bryant somewhat resembled in character and intellectual attitude; and its stately lines, themselves written for an anniversary occasion, unconsciously portray the poet himself, and are well fitted to be read on the day you now observe:

"Pale is the February sky,  
And brief the mid-day's sunny hours;  
The wind-swept forest seems to sigh  
For the sweet time of leaves and flowers.

"Yet has no month a prouder day,  
Not even when the summer broods  
O'er meadows in their fresh array,  
Or autumn tints the glowing woods.

"For this chill season now again  
Brings, in its annual round, the morn  
When, greatest of the sons of men,  
Our glorious Washington was born.

"Lo, where, beneath an icy shield  
Calmly the mighty Hudson flows;  
By snow-clad fell and frozen field  
Broadening, the mighty river goes.

"The widest storm that sweeps through space,  
And rends the oak with sudden force,  
Can raise no ripple on his face,  
Or slacken his majestic course.

"This, mid the wreck of thrones, shall live,  
Unmarred, undimmed, our hero's fame,  
And years succeeding years shall give  
Increase of honors to his name."

*Very truly yours,*

*Charles F. Richardson.*

Hanover, N. H., October 30, 1894

FROM MR. PARKE GODWIN

I answered your first letter several days ago, saying that I was preparing an address on Mr. Bryant and could find no time for any elaborate reply to your very kind request. I think I said therein also that Mr. Bryant's character and services were of a kind not easily to be mistaken. He was not only a man of genius, but a man of the widest sympathies and the most spotless conduct. No one ever approached him without being inspired at once by respect for his uprightness, and admiration for his ability. I hope your commemoration will be in every way successful.

*Yours truly,  
Parke Godwin*

Roslyn, Long Island, N. Y., October 27, 1894

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

In these days, when so many of our young people find themselves captivated by sensuous or sensational poetry, or charmed by the fashionable "verses of society," I trust your celebration may inspire them with a new love for the sane, sincere and serious verse of Bryant.

JAMES B. ANGELL

Ann Arbor, Mich., November 1, 1894

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF  
MONMOUTH COLLEGE

Mr. President, I thank you and those associated with you who have made it possible for me to enjoy with you the pleasure of this occasion. As I have listened to these delightful exercises replete with history, reminiscence, sentiment, poetry and song, I seem to have lived a hundred years in an hour. My thoughts have gone back to the birth of our poet, almost to the beginning of our government, and recalled the great wealth of heritage which the young men and women of this generation inherit. It consists not so much in its extent of territory, though that is great; not so much in the size of its standing army, though that is small; not so much in the fertility of its soil and the salubrity of its climate, though both are unsurpassed; but in the greatness and richness of the lives of its men and women, such as the one whose birth we celebrate. We have no Westminster Abbey in which their forms are chiseled in marble, and their deeds graven with a pen of iron in stone, but their names and their deeds are both preserved in the history of our free institutions and enshrined in the hearts of a grateful people. Their names brighten up all the past of our history and throw a still, clear light far out into the prophetic history of our future.

Just as the young men and women of the present, of whom I see so many in this large and representative audience, imbibe the spirit of greatness and goodness as lived by the great and the good of our country, will her future be filled with the realizations of hope.

Not so many women as men can be recalled who have made their lives sublime, though there may be

more but less conspicuous; yet, if I am not mistaken, the spirit of the times is changing, opportunities are opening and invitations are extending, as never before, to the young women to fit themselves for a more prominent part in the future; and when another hundred years of our history shall have been written, the co-education of the sexes shall have been more than vindicated in the equal number of illustrious men and women entitled to recognition on such an occasion as this.

J. B. McMICHAEL

FROM THE PROFESSOR OF  
LITERATURE AT LOMBARD UNIVERSITY

We owe the tribute of gratitude to Bryant as the poet who gave utterance to that love of nature which is instinctive in the American people. His ancestors had known the toil and struggle of the pioneer life, and by their daily experience had gained that passion for the beauty of the outside world which came to him as a precious heritage. As our first great art was landscape art, so our first great poetry was the poetry of nature. Bryant voiced the feelings of the people, but with a deep insight and truth that made him the interpreter of nature to other minds. And among all the flowers which he loved so well, and which he sought so diligently in the fields and in the woods, there was not one more beautiful than the white flower of his own blameless life.

JOHN CLARENCE LEE

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF  
CLARK UNIVERSITY

I am glad you are to honor the memory of Bryant. I know of no other poet since Wordsworth who can be called a lover of nature in so high a sense. He said, you remember, "Every one is by nature a naturalist." Believing, as I do, that not only science, but art, literature and religion have their ethnic root in the love of nature, which city life and the material utilization not only of her forces but her beauty, seems to be slowly extinguishing among children and youth, it is indeed a fit time to celebrate one whose early life drew all its strength from nature. Her laureate Bryant is becoming more and more in this country. I am, with sincere regard

*G. Stanley Hull*

Worcester, Mass., October 29, 1894

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF  
LAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

It would give me great pleasure to join with others in your celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of the poet Bryant. However, my engagements will prevent a personal expression of my sentiments. It is a splendid thing to do honor to the great men who have helped to make our literature, and also to impress their greatness upon students. I wish that all students who are forming their intellectual and moral fiber would get into it much of such strength and beauty as characterized the poet in whose honor you are meeting.

JOHN M. COULTER

Lake Forest, Ill, November 1, 1894

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